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## **Record Natural Gas Prices Prompt PSC Meeting**

As part of its effort to help Montanans effectively deal with increasing natural gas prices, the Public Service Commission (PSC) will hear from the state's three major utilities on June 24 at 1:30 pm regarding their analysis of the current natural gas market and expectations for the future. The public is also encouraged to participate in the meeting being held at the PSC offices located at 1701 Prospect Avenue, Helena.

"Insight from the utilities regarding what the future may hold for natural gas prices will be particularly helpful in preparing for what could be unprecedented costs this winter," observed PSC Chairperson Greg Jergeson. "We also want to hear any questions and suggestions the public has on the topic. It is going to take a sustained group effort to effectively mobilize and tackle this problem; we need everyone's ideas," he added.

Natural gas costs for June 2008 hit a 2.5 year high at around \$11/dekatherm. In June 2007, gas costs were \$6-7/dekatherm. Last month they were just over \$9/dekatherm. The current costs are especially troubling because natural gas prices are typically lower in the summer. In response to these increases, the PSC has begun a major push to facilitate the adoption of effective conservation measures by Montanans well before the winter heating season, and its potential to drive costs even higher, arrives.

Throughout the summer and fall, the PSC will be employing a variety of techniques to make the public aware of options for successfully contending with their natural gas bills such as home energy audits, conservation rebates and incentives, along with the details of bill assistance programs.

The June 24 informational meeting with NorthWestern Energy, Montana-Dakota Utilities, and Energy West can be viewed live via the Internet at <http://psc.mt.gov/eDocs/#Calendars> and will also be archived for viewing later on the same site. A broadband Internet connection is required for video reception and 20K or higher is needed for audio reception.

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